

TITUL
— junior —
CLASSICS

ANIMAL HEROES

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Note to Reader

A hero is an individual of unusual gifts and achievements. Whether it be man or animal, this definition applies; and it is the histories of such that appeal to the imagination and to the hearts of those who hear them.

In this volume every one of the stories, though more or less composite, is founded on the actual life of a veritable animal hero. The most composite is the White Reindeer. This story I wrote by Utrovand in Norway during the summer of 1900, while the Reindeer herds grazed in sight on the near uplands.

The Lynx is founded on some of my own early experiences in the backwoods.

It is less than ten years since the 'Jack Warhorse' won his hero-crown. Thousands of "Kaskadoans" will remember him, and by the name Warhorse his coursing exploits are recorded in several daily papers.

The least composite is Arnaux. It is so nearly historical that several who knew the bird have supplied additional items of information.

The nest of the destroying Peregrines, with its owners and their young, is now to be seen in the American Museum of Natural History of New York. The Museum authorities inform me that Pigeon badges with the following numbers were found in the nest: 9970-S, 1696, U. 63, 77, J. F. 52, Ex. 705, 6-1894, C 20900. Perhaps some Pigeon-lover may learn from these lines the fate of one or other wonderful flier that has long been recorded "never returned."

CONTENTS

Note to Reader

3

THE SLUM CAT

5

ARNAUX

THE CHRONICLE OF A HOMING PIGEON

44

BADLANDS BILLY

The Wolf that Won

66

THE BOY AND THE LYNX

101

LITTLE WARHORSE

The History of a Jack-rabbit

123

SNAP

THE STORY OF

A BULL-TERRIER

157

THE WINNIPEG WOLF

175

THE LEGEND

OF THE WHITE REINDEER

196

THE SLUM CAT

Life I

I

“**M**-e-a-t! M-e-a-t!” came shrilling down Scrimper’s Alley. Surely the Pied Piper of Hamelin was there, for it seemed that all the Cats in the neighborhood were running toward the sound, though the Dogs, it must be confessed, looked scornfully indifferent.

“Meat! Meat!” and louder; then the centre of attraction came in view—a rough, dirty little man with a push-cart; while straggling behind him were a score of Cats that joined in his cry with a sound nearly the same as his own. Every fifty yards, that is, as soon as a goodly throng of Cats was gathered, the push-cart stopped. The man with the magic voice took out of the box in his cart a skewer on which were pieces of strong-smelling boiled liver. With a long stick he pushed the pieces off. Each Cat seized on one, and wheeling, with a slight depression of the ears and a little tiger growl and glare, she rushed away with her prize to devour it in some safe retreat.

“Meat! Meat!” And still they came to get their portions. All were well known to the meat-man. There was Castiglione’s Tiger; this was Jones’s Black; here

was Pralitsky's "Torkershell," and this was Madame Danton's White; there sneaked Blenkinshoff's Maltee, and that climbing on the barrow was Sawyer's old Orange Billy, an impudent fraud that never had had any financial backing, — all to be remembered and kept in account. This one's owner was sure pay, a dime a week; that one's doubtful. There was John Washee's Cat, that got only a small piece because John was in arrears. Then there was the saloon-keeper's collared and ribboned ratter, which got an extra lump because the 'barkeep' was liberal; and the rounds-man's Cat, that brought no cash, but got unusual consideration because the meat-man did. But there were others. A black Cat with a white nose came rushing confidently with the rest, only to be repulsed savagely. Alas! Pussy did not understand. She had been a pensioner of the barrow for months. Why this unkind change? It was beyond her comprehension. But the meat-man knew. Her mistress had stopped payment. The meat-man kept no books but his memory, and it never was at fault.

Outside this patrician 'four hundred' about the barrow, were other Cats, keeping away from the push-cart because they were not on the list, the Social Register as it were, yet fascinated by the heavenly smell and the faint possibility of accidental good luck. Among these hangers-on was a thin gray Slummer, a homeless Cat that lived by her wits — slab-sided and not over-clean. One could see at a glance that she was doing her duty by a family in some out-of-the-way

corner. She kept one eye on the barrow circle and the other on the possible Dogs.

She saw a score of happy Cats slink off with their delicious 'daily' and their tiger-like air, but no opening for her, till a big Tom of her own class sprang on a little pensioner with intent to rob. The victim dropped the meat to defend herself against the enemy, and before the 'all-powerful' could intervene, the gray Slummer saw her chance, seized the prize, and was gone.

She went through the hole in Menzie's side door and over the wall at the back, then sat down and devoured the lump of liver, licked her chops, felt absolutely happy, and set out by devious ways to the rubbish-yard, where, in the bottom of an old cracker-box, her family was awaiting her. A plaintive mewling reached her ears. She went at speed and reached the box to see a huge Black Tom-cat calmly destroying her brood. He was twice as big as she, but she went at him with all her strength, and he did as most animals will do when caught wrong-doing, he turned and ran away. Only one was left, a little thing like its mother, but of more pronounced color — gray with black spots, and a white touch on nose, ears, and tail-tip. There can be no question of the mother's grief for a few days; but that wore off, and all her care was for the survivor. That benevolence was as far as possible from the motives of the murderous old Tom there can be no doubt; but he proved a blessing in deep disguise, for both mother and Kit were visibly bettered in a short time. The daily

quest for food continued. The meat-man rarely proved a success, but the ash-cans were there, and if they did not afford a meat-supply, at least they were sure to produce potato-skins that could be used to allay the gripe of hunger for another day.

One night the mother Cat smelt a wonderful smell that came from the East River at the end of the alley. A new smell always needs investigating, and when it is attractive as well as new, there is but one course open. It led Pussy to the docks a block away, and then out on a wharf, away from any cover but the night. A sudden noise, a growl and a rush, were the first notice she had that she was cut off by her old enemy, the Wharf Dog. There was only one escape. She leaped from the wharf to the vessel from which the smell came. The Dog could not follow, so when the fish-boat sailed in the morning Pussy unwillingly went with her and was seen no more.

II

The Slum Kitten waited in vain for her mother. The morning came and went. She became very hungry. Toward evening a deep-laid instinct drove her forth to seek food. She slunk out of the old box, and feeling her way silently among the rubbish, she smelt everything that seemed eatable, but without finding food. At length she reached the wooden steps leading down into Jap Malee's bird-store underground. The door was open a little. She wandered into a world of rank and curious smells and a number of living things in cages

all about her. A negro was sitting idly on a box in a corner. He saw the little stranger enter and watched it curiously. It wandered past some Rabbits. They paid no heed. It came to a wide-barred cage in which was a Fox. The gentleman with the bushy tail was in a far corner. He crouched low; his eyes glowed. The Kitten wandered, sniffing, up to the bars, put its head in, sniffed again, then made toward the feed-pan, to be seized in a flash by the crouching Fox. It gave a frightened "mew," but a single shake cut that short and would have ended Kitty's nine lives at once, had not the negro come to the rescue. He had no weapon and could not get into the cage, but he spat with such copious vigor in the Fox's face that he dropped the Kitten and returned to the corner, there to sit blinking his eyes in sullen fear.

The negro pulled the Kitten out. The shake of the beast of prey seemed to have stunned the victim, really to have saved it much suffering. The Kitten seemed unharmed, but giddy. It tottered in a circle for a time, then slowly revived, and a few minutes later was purring in the negro's lap, apparently none the worse, when Jap Malee, the bird-man, came home.

Jap was not an Oriental; he was a full-blooded Cockney, but his eyes were such little accidental slits aslant in his round, flat face, that his first name was forgotten in the highly descriptive title of "Jap." He was not especially unkind to the birds and beasts whose sales were supposed to furnish his living, but his eye

was on the main chance; he knew what he wanted. He didn't want the Slum Kitten.

The negro gave it all the food it could eat, then carried it to a distant block and dropped it in a neighboring iron-yard.

III

One full meal is as much as any one needs in two or three days, and under the influence of this stored-up heat and power, Kitty was very lively. She walked around the piled-up rubbish, cast curious glances on far-away Canary-birds in cages that hung from high windows; she peeped over fences, discovered a large Dog, got quietly down again, and presently finding a sheltered place in full sunlight, she lay down and slept for an hour. A slight 'sniff' awakened her, and before her stood a large Black Cat with glowing green eyes, and the thick neck and square jaws that distinguish the Tom; a scar marked his cheek, and his left ear was torn. His look was far from friendly; his ears moved backward a little, his tail twitched, and a faint, deep sound came from his throat. The Kitten innocently walked toward him. She did not remember him. He rubbed the sides of his jaws on a post, and quietly, slowly turned and disappeared. The last that she saw of him was the end of his tail twitching from side to side; and the little Slummer had no idea that she had been as near death to-day, as she had been when she ventured into the fox-cage.